



MEMORANDUM

TO: BCSS MEMBER SCHOOLS
FROM: JORDAN ABNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: BCSS AIR QUALITY GUIDELINES
DATE: MAY 18, 2023
CC: BCSS ZONE PRESIDENTS, SUPERINTENDENTS, LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

I want to begin by offering our support to those directly affected by fires currently burning, especially North Peace Secondary in Fort St. John who are dealing with real threats to their community with much of their population either on alert or already evacuated. We are thinking of you all.

Due to the fires in Northeast BC, and across Alberta we have seen a rapid worsening of air quality in many areas of the province this week. BCSS has guidelines to assist schools in determining the appropriate course of action for various air qualities. Ultimately, at the local level, it is up to district and school leaders to decide on what is safe. Likewise, at a zone championship, zone leaders with the support of their administration should make that call, and BCSS and our team in the office will determine what effects our outdoor competitions will see next week.

Many steps can be taken, such as shortening games, allowing for additional substitutions and providing additional hydration/rest breaks. Poor air quality can lead to additional cardiovascular strain compared to exertion in ideal conditions and as always, student-athlete safety remains our foremost priority. In some areas, cancellations may be required if the air quality worsens. Again, all decisions are made by the appropriate parties at their respective levels.

If zone championships can't be completed, the affected zones will need to determine which teams attend the provincial events, based on their assessment and criteria. If this appears to be a possibility, zones should begin discussions on this now.

BCSS provides the following guidelines from Health Canada, and current, location-specific data can be found through the BC Government Air Quality site here:

<https://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality/readings/find-stations-map.html>

On this site, there are also additional tools provided by the BC Government to help look at locations and potential smoke patterns. Schools, districts and zones are encouraged to use all the data possible to make informed decisions.



BCSS Air Quality Guidelines:

- **AQHI 4-6: Moderate Risk** – Activities can be performed as normal, but provide extra recovery time where required, and coaches should perform keen athlete observation for any signs of distress, coughing or throat irritation.
 - Examples: Provide additional breaks in games for water, cooling, and recovery, similar to an excessive heat protocol
- **AQHI 7-9: High Risk** – Outdoor activities should be modified to lessen the strenuous nature of the activities, exposure time should be monitored and lessened where possible.
 - Examples: In addition to additional breaks, games may need to be shortened, or additional substitutions permitted
- **AQHI 10+: Very High Risk** – Strenuous activities should be moved indoors, periods of exposure outdoors should be minimized, and outdoor activities should be restricted to low or moderate-intensity activities.

Should you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the BCSS office at info@bcschoolsports.ca or 604-477-1488, and please keep us apprised of developments at zone championships, so we can support the zones in their effort to complete (if possible) their championships, or make alternative arrangements.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jordan Abney', written in a cursive style.

Jordan Abney
Executive Director